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## Saguaro National Park News Release

13-05

*For Immediate Release*

November 13, 2012

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### **SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK HOSTS OPEN HOUSE TO DISCUSS RESTORATION PLANS**

Tucson, AZ— Saguaro National Park is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) as part of a proactive plan to restore park resources. The park is hosting a public meeting on November 27 at the Wilmot Library to discuss proposed actions in the plan. One of the proposed strategies includes aerial application of herbicide in the park's back-country to combat infestations of buffelgrass.

"Buffelgrass is a significant threat to park resources. We are concerned about the increased potential for a major wildland fire due to this invasive grass and a changing climate," according to Darla Sidles, Superintendent of Saguaro National Park. "This EA will evaluate the environmental impact of restoration treatments, and allow the public to identify any concerns they have about the proposal."

Recent aerial mapping of parklands confirmed that >3,000 individual areas of buffelgrass, up to 58 acres in size, are present within park boundaries. Much of that is inaccessible to ground crews. The park has historically used ground crews to spray invasive plants with herbicide since 2005. Proposed aerial spraying as part of this restoration plan would occur in back-country areas away from neighboring developments, riparian areas, and traditional harvesting areas.

This plan also includes proposed treatment of other disturbances and future potential threats. Other proposed strategies include a variety of mechanisms for seeding and stabilizing soil after fire, erosion, or for use on abandoned roadways, for example.

The public is invited to join the discussion, as part of this preliminary meeting, to inform the first draft of this EA. Once the Draft EA is released later this winter, there will be an official public comment period at that time as well. For more information, contact Natasha Kline, Biologist (520) 733 5171, or visit [www.nps.gov/sagu](http://www.nps.gov/sagu). There is a link from the Saguaro National Park website to the official NPS planning website where this proposed project (#42246) can be reviewed.

#### **OPEN HOUSE DETAILS**

**WHO:** Saguaro National Park and all interested public

**WHAT:** Open House to discuss future restoration plans and aerial spraying strategy.

**WHERE:** Wilmot Library, 530 N. Wilmot Road, Tucson

**WHEN:** November 27, 2012: Drop in any time between 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

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